

medicine their doctors prescribe. So they do not fill the prescriptions. They cut the pills in half. They do things they shouldn't do, and they get sick. When they get sick, what happens? They end up in a hospital. If they end up in a hospital, guess what. Medicare will pay the bills now. We wouldn't pay for the pills to keep them out of the hospital but we will pay for the pills when they get sick and go to a hospital.

We think a prescription drug benefit makes sense. We think that is what we should be debating on the floor of the Senate. But we do not. Another week passes by. We consider a lot of other things, and families across America return to ask us: Where are your priorities? What are you thinking about?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. DURBIN. I will conclude. I thank you, Mr. President, for the time you have given me this morning and hope that the leadership on Capitol Hill will feel the same passion, the same intensity, and have the same commitment to issues that American families care about than they do about one family from Cuban.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

THANKING THE CHAIR

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank the Chair. I want to start out by thanking the Chair for his courtesy. There are many who preside over the Senate who do not always listen to Members during debates while they are on the floor. You are one who does, and I have to thank you for your courtesy.

SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to build on the comments of my colleague, Senator DURBIN—not in a shrill way but I guess in a determined way.

A good friend of mine has really become a dear friend. I love his work. Jonathan Kozol wrote a book called "Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation." He has now written another book. I think people in the country, as is the case with all of Jonathan's work—and I wouldn't be surprised if the Chair in his commitment to children hasn't read some of his work—have read his work because it is very important. He sent to me yesterday in the mail—I didn't bring it with me to the floor because I didn't realize I had a chance to speak—some data about per pupil expenditures in New York City and surrounding suburbs.

The long and the short of it is that the suburbs surrounding the city, because of the wealth of the communities with strong reliance on property taxes, are able to spend about twice as much per pupil as the inner city. Not surprisingly, their teachers are certified and qualified, which is not the case nec-

essarily in the city in terms of having had the experience of certification or expertise in the subject matter. Not surprisingly, therefore, there is tremendous variation in terms of those children and their opportunities to succeed.

I raise this question because I hope that soon we will have the Elementary and Secondary Education Act out on the floor. When we do, I hope it will be the Senate at its best.

I am going to register the same, if you will, grievance or sharp dissent from the majority leader. I haven't done it behind his back. He knows what my position is about the way we have been operating.

I hope when this bill comes to the floor this will not be yet another case of the majority leader essentially saying: Look, only the following amendments will be in order. Any other amendments will not be. What happens is there is no agreement, and the majority leader files cloture. Then cloture is not invoked. Then the bill is pulled. I hope we don't see that.

Last week, or the week before our recess, we had this debate over the marriage penalty tax. There were a number of us who wanted to bring out amendments that we thought were terribly important dealing with prescription drug costs. Again, the majority leader said: This isn't relevant, and therefore I choose not to go forward. We had a debate about it and cloture was invoked. We will have that debate again. Or there was an effort to invoke cloture, cloture was not obtained, and the bill was pulled.

I think that is what happened, and, as a result, I think the Senate has lost its vitality.

I was elected in 1991. Honest to goodness, I think it is the truth. I don't think anybody can present evidence to the contrary. The way I remember it was that up until fairly recently, this was the pattern: A bill would come to the floor. Senators would come with amendments. We might have 60 or 90 amendments. Some would drop off and some of them wouldn't. We could go at it. We would start in the morning, go into the evening, and take a week, or 10 days, or 2 weeks. But we had debates. We had discussion. We had votes. We dealt with issues that were important to people's lives. We voted yes. We voted no. We had some vitality.

I say to the majority leader that I believe we have moved away from that to the detriment of this institution. I think we are sucking the vitality out of the Senate by the way we are conducting business. I strongly dissent from the majority leader in the way he has been proceeding. It is true that in this way people do not have to vote on amendments. But what representative democracy is all about is accountability. What the Senate is all about is it is an amendment body. It is a debate body. And individual Senators, whether you have a lot of seniority or whether you don't, can make a difference in the

Senate—or could make a difference in the Senate before—because you could bring amendments and have at it.

I started out focusing on children and education. I am real interested, as long as we are talking about high standards, in making sure every child has the same opportunity to meet those standards. I would like to talk about that.

You and I, Mr. President, talked some about early childhood development and how important it is pre-K. Why isn't the Federal Government more of a player? Why aren't we getting more resources? Your colleague from Ohio feels just as strongly about it. You and I talked about it. Why is it that people working with children ages 3 and 4 do such important work, and then all of their work is so devalued in terms of the pay they make? How can we provide the incentive for men and women to go into the field?

I am concerned, as is Senator DURBIN, coming from a State such as mine that only one-third of senior citizens in our State have prescription drug coverage at all. I see it all the time in terms of what this has done to people. It is not atypical to talk to a single elderly woman whose husband has passed away. She might be 75. Her monthly income might be \$600 and \$300 of it is for prescription drug costs.

I want to come out here to talk about a bill Senator DORGAN and I have worked on that would make a huge difference in terms of costs. But, no, we couldn't have that debate.

I am from an agricultural State. We have an economic convulsion in agriculture. Many people who I love and respect work so hard. No one can say they don't work hard. It doesn't matter; they can work 19 hours a day. They can be the greatest managers in the world. They are being spit out of the economy and they are losing their farms in this economy. I want to talk about how we can make some changes to the farm bill passed in 1996 called Freedom to Farm—some of us call it "freedom to fail"—so we can deal with the price crises. I would like to talk about whether we can reach an agreement on the antitrust action so producers can have a level playing field.

Mr. President, there are many issues that are important to people's lives, whether people live in metro, urban, rural, or suburban communities. There are many issues that are important to children to make sure that we as a nation at least come closer to reaching our national vow of equal opportunity for every child. There are issues that deal with reform and, God knows, I would think all of us would hate the mix of money in politics. I can't stand raising money. I can't bear it. I hate getting on the phone. I think, systematically, it creates tremendous problems in terms of undercutting representative democracy, where some people have too much access to both parties at an institutional level and too many people don't.

I would like to see us focus on reform. I have just mentioned some